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Howdy!

In 2010-11, the Texas A&M athletic department enjoyed its best overall performance in school history. With three NCAA team championships, an equestrian national championship, a men's NCAA tennis doubles championship and a record nine Big 12 titles, it's easy to see why some people are now referring to Aggieland as Titledown, Texas. So, when it was time for the AI staff to sit down and select our top 12 stories of the year, the overall success of A&M athletics was our obvious No. 1.

While you are reading our top 12 stories (page 19), you may notice that, in one way or another, many of them involve two of the most decorated athletes in school history – Danielle Adams and Von Miller. Therefore, it was no surprise that those two living legends dominated our votes for the 2011 AI Sportsperson of the Year (page 31). What would your top 12 stories be? Who would you pick for AI Sportsperson of the Year? Send your selections to editor@aggiemag.com.

This time last year, our top story was "To SECede or not SECede." Now, as we crawl through this seemingly never-ending lull between baseball and football season, the Texas A&M to SEC talk is beginning to heat up again. The magnitude is nothing compared to last offseason, but the questionable stability of the new Big 12 has people now wondering not if, but when.

Whether it's in the next two years or five years from now, A&M's eventual move to the SEC seems inevitable. So, for fun, let's imagine how some of the Aggie programs might have fared in the SEC during this banner year. *For this exercise, we will just assume A&M moves into the current SEC West division.*

Director's Cup Standings (2010-11)

Big 12: 1st; SEC prediction: 2nd
 Florida (4th), Texas A&M (8th), LSU (19th), Georgia (20th), Tennessee (22nd), Arkansas (24th) and Alabama (25th).

Football (19th, Cotton Bowl)

Big 12 South: 1st (Tied for South Championship); SEC West prediction: 4th
 Best in the SEC: Auburn, Best in the West: Auburn

Men's Basketball (24th, NCAA 2nd Round)

Big 12: 3rd; SEC prediction: 3rd (1st in West)
 Best in the SEC: Florida, Best in the West: Texas A&M

Women's Basketball (1st, NCAA National Champions)

Big 12: 2nd; SEC prediction: 1st
 Best in the SEC: Texas A&M

Baseball (6th, College World Series)

Big 12: 1st (Co-Reg. Season and Tourn. Champs); SEC prediction: 3rd (1st in West)
 Best in the SEC: South Carolina, Best in the West: Texas A&M

Softball (17th, NCAA Super Regional)

Big 12: 3rd; SEC prediction: 3rd (2nd in West)
 Best in the SEC: Alabama, Best in the West: Alabama

Soccer (16th, NCAA Second Round)

Big 12: 1st (Regular Season Champs); SEC prediction: 1st (1st in West)
 Best in the SEC: Texas A&M, Best in the West: Texas A&M

Budget (Estimates based on 2009-10 athletic expenses)

Florida (\$105 million), LSU (\$102 million), Tennessee (\$97 million), Auburn (\$91 million), Alabama (\$85 million), South Carolina (\$78 million), Texas A&M (\$76 million), Georgia (\$76 million), Kentucky (\$76 million), Arkansas (\$72 million), Vanderbilt (\$46 million), Ole Miss (\$44 million) and Mississippi State (\$36 million).

Visit www.aggielandillustrated.com/blog for a more in-depth look at these predictions, and feel free to comment and let us know if you agree or disagree.

Gig'em!

Brian '01

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aggies in omaha

Making their first appearance in more than a decade, the Texas A&M baseball team met defending national champion South Carolina in the opening round of the College World Series in front of 23,395 fans at TD Ameritrade Park in Omaha, Neb. The Aggies lost a heartbreaker, 5-4, on a walk-off single in the bottom of the ninth. Photo by John Peterson.





snapshot

triple double

Seniors Jessica Beard and Tabarie Henry were first to cross the finish line of their respective 4 x 400 relays. The dramatic victories in the final events of the 2011 NCAA Outdoor Championships clinched national titles for both programs for the third consecutive year. Photos by Errol Anderson.



MATT DAVIS (QB)
Klein Forest HS



Football players often struggle to connect with the school they play for. Some never feel an attachment even when they're on campus for four or five years. And then there are players like Matt Davis.

The No. 1 rated quarterback in Texas according to gigem247.com threw for 1,400 yards and 14 touchdowns while adding over 1,400 yards rushing and 22 touchdowns on the ground as a sophomore. As a junior, the 6-2, 200-pound dual-threat quarterback's season ended almost as soon as it started when he suffered a knee injury in the first game of the year. However, Texas A&M continued to recruit the dynamic athlete, and their commitment paid off when Davis pledged to the Aggies earlier this year.

Since then, Davis has bounced back from his injury with a successful spring and summer, which already includes being selected to quarterback the southwest region in ESPN's Champion Gridiron Kings in July – a series of competitions featuring 64 of the nation's top high school football players.

Off the field, the sociable quarterback from Klein Forest is trying to convince every other talented player he gets within talking distance of to join him in Aggieland. His ability to relate with other recruits has already paid huge dividends, and it is setting Davis up to be one of the most influential Aggie commits in recent history.

"I'm just trying to get a family together," Davis said. "Wherever I went, that was one of the biggest things – a family environment. That's something I immediately noticed when I went to A&M. You're always going to see nice facilities, big stadiums and crazy fans, but you can't fake family. That was something so real and I loved that."

As the quarterback of the class, Davis sees it as his responsibility to be a leader and get everyone together.

"That's the first step to a national championship," he said. "Everyone has to be family and everyone has to be on

head of the CLASS

BY TAYLOR HAMM '07

the same page, so I'm trying to start our chapter right there. I can't wait to join the family. Gig'em!"

Although he won't admit it, the No. 5 rated quarterback in the country according to 247sports.com played a huge role in at least three of A&M's most recent commitments.

"At the end of the day this is Coach Sherman's, Coach Cassidy's, Coach's Williams', Coach Rossley's – everybody recruiting – it's their class, not mine," Davis said. "But I definitely look at myself as a leader. In any situation, whether I'm on the football field, in class or if it's dodgeball – I'm always going to step up and be the leader. I'll be the first one to take the blame and the first one to push away the critic."

Although he has yet to put on an A&M uniform, Davis feels like he has a responsibility for himself and his future team.

"That responsibility comes with being the quarterback in the class," he said. "You want to recruit great athletes around you."

Klein Forest football coach Kenny Hammock calls Davis a dynamic player who leads by example on and off the field.

"Matt was blessed with talent and leadership," he said. "You don't find that often."

While Davis is focused on his senior year of high school and winning a state championship before he leaves for Aggieiland, he also has plans for when football is over – whenever that day comes.

"My goal is to one day start a non-profit organization like a big brothers club," he said. "I love helping kids."

Davis says he is blessed to have both parents, but he knows a lot of kids struggle without a male influence in their lives.

"I've seen it with some of my friends. Mothers are great but they can't teach a young boy how to be a man. That's definitely one thing that I would love to do."

In the meantime, Davis is not waiting around for the day when he gets to help people. That's how he lives every day.

"I try to help at least one person a day. One isn't my limit, but if I can help at least one person then that day was successful. I may not change a million kids, I may not have the same impact Tim Tebow did, but if I help out one person then I feel I was successful."

Davis' senior campaign begins on August 25 at Klein Memorial Stadium. **A**



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(baseball) The Aggies enjoyed a breakthrough season in 2011, reaching the College World Series for the first time since 1999. It was a milestone for A&M coach Rob Childress who had been to Omaha three times as an assistant at Nebraska, but never as a head coach. The Aggies played the last game of the opening weekend of the CWS against defending national champion South Carolina. In front of 23,395 fans at TD Ameritrade Park, both teams combined for eight runs in the first inning – six of them being unearned. In the bottom of the ninth, the Gamecocks got a walk-off single from Scott Wingo to claim the victory, 5-4. Two days later, the Aggies faced Cal in an elimination game. It was a pitcher's duel for the first three and a half innings until junior Adam Smith grabbed the lead for the Aggies with a solo home run. The lead did not last long, however, as a pair of A&M errors in the top of the fifth paved the way for the Golden Bears to take a 3-1 advantage and on their way to a 7-3 victory. The Aggies ended the year at 47-22, the sixth-most wins in school history, and wrapped up a school-record fifth consecutive trip to the NCAA Tournament. **(men's tennis)** Seniors Austin Krajicek and Jeff Dadamo became the first ever Texas A&M national champions in tennis winning the 2011 NCAA Doubles Championship by defeating the host Stanford doubles team of Bradley Klahn and Ryan Thacher, 7-6 (4), 6-3. The most outstanding Aggie doubles team in history, Krajicek and Dadamo earned All-America honors for the second consecutive year. The dynamic duo posted a 27-3 dual match record this spring and led the Aggies to the 2011 Big 12 Championships crown. Krajicek leaves Aggieland as a two-time Big 12 Player of the Year and the all-time A&M leader in doubles victories with 112 wins.





second CHANCE

With immense determination, junior Natalie Villarreal found her way back on to the field

BY KELSEY KEENE '12

When the Aggie softball team took the field in 2010, there was a noticeable absence at second base. The team was missing No. 16 Natalie Villarreal.

After an outstanding sophomore season in 2009, where Villarreal posted a .971 fielding percentage and was named Big 12 Defensive Player of the Year, the pressure of being a student athlete began to take its toll.

"I let everything pile up and I just got behind," she said. "I gave up on myself."

Villarreal's struggles in the classroom that fall gave her a negative attitude towards everything and ultimately forced her to leave Texas A&M and the Aggie softball program.

"I ended up leaving what I love," she said.

Villarreal attended every home game the following season, only she was in the stands, not on the field.

"It was one of the hardest things I've ever been through in my life," she admitted. I would sit at home and cry and think about how I messed up, how I lost something that I might never get back."

Villarreal returned home that summer and began taking classes online to bring up her GPA. She was determined to get back what she once had.

When the fall 2010 semester began, Villarreal was on the right path to becoming eligible again, but she had to continue earning As and Bs. And while getting back in to school was a huge challenge to overcome, getting herself in the right condition to play softball at the same level again was anything but easy.

"I wanted to come back and prove that I could still do it. Still work hard and still be the player I was before," she said.

It was a slow and painstaking process, but Villarreal had set her mind to return-

ing to the field in 2011 and she did just that.

By the time the season opener rolled around, Villarreal was back in all-conference form with a brand new attitude. Her appreciation for the opportunity to play was on a whole new level.

Not only was she back on defense, she also led the team in offense in 2011. In the leadoff position, the redshirt junior posted a .346 overall batting average while topping team stats in runs (43), hits (53) and doubles (13) and stealing 10 bases. Villarreal rode a 16-game hitting streak during the season and recorded 11 multiple-hit games and seven multiple-RBI games, including two four-RBI games that featured a grand slam. Back at second base, she earned Big 12 Co-Defensive Player of the Year honors and was selected to the All-Big 12 first team.

The Aggies finished the 2011 season

"It was one of the hardest things I've ever been through in my life. I would sit at home and cry and think about how I messed up, how I lost something that I might never get back."


— NATALIE VILLARREAL



ranked No. 13 and advanced to their fourth NCAA Super Regional, losing to eventual national champion Arizona State. At home, the Aggies were at their best, winning every game this season including an upset over 3rd-ranked Texas in the Lone Star Showdown. Fittingly, it was Villarreal who hit a single in the 2nd inning to score 2 runs to give A&M the lead for good.

"When I play I try not to smile, but I couldn't help it," she admitted. I'm sure I was cheesin' after that one."

This time last year Villarreal didn't know if she would ever play softball again. Now she is back and has learned so much from her time away from the game with one more year of eligibility remaining.

"You never know how good you have it until you don't have it anymore," she said. "Everyone makes mistakes. That was a big mistake. But I battled back." 

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Looking back on Texas A&M athletics in 2010-11, we give you our picks for the biggest stories of the year

BY BRIAN DAVIS '01

[01] BANNER YEAR FOR AGGIE ATHLETICS

Now that the final chapter on Texas A&M's year in athletics has been written, the collective success of the department in 2010-11 can safely be called the best in school history. In the annual Director's Cup standings, the Aggies finished in eighth place with a record point total of 1090.5 points, the second consecutive top 10 performance by the program. Of the 20 sports programs on campus, twelve finished in the top 10 and 15 Aggie teams finished in the top 25. The Texas A&M men's and women's outdoor track and field programs and the equestrian western team all won unprecedented third straight national titles. The women's basketball team claimed the program's first-ever national title, while the men's tennis doubles tandem of Austin Krajicek and Jeff Dadamo became the first ever Texas A&M national champions in tennis. The Aggies also won nine Big 12 Championship trophies in 2010-11 setting a new mark in that area with soccer, football (south division), men's indoor track and field, equestrian, men's tennis, baseball (co-regular season and tournament) and men's and women's outdoor track and field all claiming titles. In addition to winning championships, Texas A&M enjoyed tremendous postseason success across the board with baseball reaching the College World Series for the first time since 1999, men's basketball making their sixth consecutive trip to the NCAA Tournament, football earning a Cotton Bowl bid and several other programs finishing in the top 10 of NCAA championship tournaments. Indeed, 2010-11 was truly a banner year for Texas A&M athletics.

[02] WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS

The Texas A&M women's basketball team shocked the sports world in 2011 by claiming the program's first-ever national championship. The incredible journey began when the eighth-

ranked Aggies earned their fourth consecutive No. 2 seed in the NCAA Women's Basketball Championship and headed to Shreveport, La. After routing McNeese State (87-47) and Rutgers (70-48), A&M moved on to the Dallas Regional for a Sweet 16 matchup against Georgia. Despite a possible rematch against top-seeded Baylor looming in the next round, the Aggies kept their focus and dominated the Bulldogs, building a 31-point halftime lead on the way to a 79-38 victory. In the Elite Eight, fans got the matchup they wanted between the Aggies and the Bears. Texas A&M had lost eight straight games against its Big 12 rival, including the previous three in 2011, but this time was different – it was A&M's time. Coach Gary Blair's team led from start to finish and the Aggies advanced to the NCAA Final Four for the first time in school history with a 58-46 victory. In Indianapolis, Texas A&M faced Stanford – another No. 1 seed – who was playing in their fourth consecutive Final Four. When Stanford took a 54-44 lead with 6:01 to play, it appeared that the Cardinal were heading to their third title game in four years. However, Blair's team had other plans and made a furious comeback that concluded with a Tyra White layup with 3.3 seconds left giving the Aggies a thrilling 63-62 victory. That set up a championship matchup with fellow No. 2 seed Notre Dame – the first title game without a No. 1 seed since 1994 and only the second ever. In front of a mostly green and gold crowd of 17,473, the Aggies made history, defeating the Irish in a back and forth battle, 76-70, behind a legendary performance from All-American Danielle Adams. The historic championship run captured new fans across the nation and vaulted Texas A&M to the top of the women's basketball world. The Aggies closed out the 2010-11 season with a school-record 33 wins and earned a program-best No. 1 national ranking in the final ESPN/USA Today Coaches Top 25 Poll.



[03] VON MILLER'S STORYBOOK ENDING

As he sat in a small, crowded interview room in the bowels of DKR-Texas Memorial Stadium following the Aggies' 24-17 victory over the Longhorns, Von Miller was asked if the season had gone anything like he imagined when he made the decision to put the NFL on hold and returned for his senior year. An emotional Miller took a deep breath and said, "Everything and then some. This is exactly what I imagined. The feeling is overwhelming... I wish I had the decision to contemplate again because I would come back again. It's crazy that it's almost over." Indeed, Miller's storybook ending could not have been written much better. After battling an injury during the first half of the season, Miller steadily became more and more dominant and was clearly the best player on the field in every game. Unblockable as a pass rusher, Miller constantly reeked havoc in opposing backfields and made plays all over the field, finishing the year with 68 tackles, 17.5 tackles for losses, 10.5 sacks, an interception and six other passes batted down, three forced fumbles and two recovered fumbles. On the biggest stages, Miller was at his best, helping bring the Wrecking Crew back to Texas A&M. His spectacular senior campaign earned Miller consensus first-team All-American honors as well as the 2010 Butkus Award. Miller's remarkable A&M career culminated when he was selected second overall in the 2011 NFL Draft by the Denver Broncos, securing his legacy as one of the greatest players to ever don the maroon and white.

[04] NOVEMBER TO REMEMBER

For more than a decade, the month of November has been anything but memorable for the Texas A&M football program. In fact, outside of several victories over archrival Texas, the month has been downright awful for Aggie football in the 21st century. In 2010, the Aggies erased years of frustrating finishes with an unforgettable run through their November slate, knocking out two top ten opponents at home and two bitter rivals on the

road. It all began when Tim DeRuyter's defense resurrected the Wrecking Crew with three goal-line stands in a 33-19 upset over No. 8 Oklahoma. The following week, the Aggies rallied from a 16-point first-half deficit for a 42-30 win over Baylor in Waco. Back for senior night in front of a Kyle Field record crowd of 90,079 and a national TV audience, the Wrecking Crew had a performance for the ages, playing with fanatical effort while holding No. 8 Nebraska to just two field goals in a 9-6 Aggie victory. In the annual Thanksgiving showdown, the Aggies went to Austin and completed their fantastic finish by defeating their archrivals, 24-17, keeping Texas A&M in the hunt for the Big 12 South title while eliminating the Longhorns from bowl consideration. When it was all said and done, the Aggies finished the regular season on a six-game winning streak and earned a share of the Big 12 South title and a trip to the Cotton Bowl.

[05] TRACK AND FIELD TRIPLE DOUBLE

When the dust settled at the 2011 NCAA Outdoor Championships, the Texas A&M track and field program had made history in becoming the only school to win dual national championship titles in three consecutive years. In a dramatic victory that came down to the final event – the 4 x 400 relay – the men claimed the title by one point while the women won by four. On the women's side, senior Jessica Beard powered the Aggies by the rest of the field during the anchor leg in dominating fashion. Beard knew that she only needed to finish ahead of Oregon to win the title, but she wouldn't settle for anything less than winning the relay as well. Fittingly it was also a senior – Tabarie Henry – who anchored the men's relay. To have a shot at the title, the Aggies had to win the event as well as have Florida finish below fifth place. When the relay was over, Henry was first to cross the finish line while the Gators placed sixth, sealing the championship for the Aggie men. The NCAA titles were number 32 and 33 for head coach Pat Henry firmly cementing his name as the greatest college track and field coach of all time.

[06] BYE TURGEON, HOWDY BILLY KENNEDY

Mark Turgeon sent shockwaves through Aggieland in early May when he accepted the head coaching job at Maryland and left the Aggies without a men's basketball coach. While Texas A&M was never expected to be Turgeon's destination job, the timing of his departure was surprising. After all, the annual coaching carousel appeared to be over, the Aggies were fresh off their sixth straight trip to the NCAA Tournament and next year's team was widely expected to be the best in Turgeon's tenure. However, when the Terps came calling after Gary Williams abruptly retired, Turgeon saw greener pastures on the East Coast and could not pass up the opportunity to coach at a "basketball school." Fortunately for the A&M program, Bill Byrne has established an outstanding reputation for hiring basketball coaches. The Aggie AD always keeps a list, and this time he went out and hired one-time Aggie assistant Billy Kennedy from Murray State. In his introductory press conference, it did not take long for Kennedy to win over the Aggies in attendance with his passion for the game and his sincerity about A&M being his dream job. Priority number one was to convince all of the returning and incoming players to remain in the A&M program. Then, Coach Kennedy went out and hired one of the nation's top recruiters, Glynn Cyprien, away from Memphis as his top assistant. Texas A&M may have lost a good coach, but fortunately Turgeon left the program in great shape for Kennedy and his staff to build on.

[07] THE QUARTERBACK CONTROVERSY

The 2010 football season was supposed to be Jerrod Johnson's time to shine. Following a record-setting junior campaign, Johnson entered his senior year with some Heisman buzz as the Big 12's preseason Offensive Player of the Year. Unfortunately, the do-it-all signal-caller was never able to regain his form after off-season shoulder surgery and struggled with turnovers throughout the first half of the season. When fans and the media began calling for Ryan Tannehill to see the first meaningful action of his career at quarterback, the writing was on the wall for Johnson. With a disappointing 3-3 record halfway through the season and riding a three game losing streak, Mike Sherman made what was likely one of the most difficult decisions of his coaching career. First, he let the two quarterbacks split time against Kansas. The following week against Texas Tech, he made the switch to Tannehill completely. In his first career start at quarterback, Tannehill threw for a school-record 449 passing yards on 36-50 passing with four touchdowns in a 45-27 victory over the Red Raiders. The Aggies went on to win the rest of their regular games in 2010, but Johnson never took another snap. It was an unfortunate ending for someone who always said and did the right things during his stellar Aggie career. On the field, Johnson left Texas A&M with two Big 12 records and 24 school records. Off the field, he left unparalleled class, dignity and respect, and gave more to the program than he took away.

[08] AGGIES GO TO OMAHA

With spectacular pitching performances from junior All-American Ross Stripling and sophomore ace Michael Wacha, the Texas A&M baseball team navigated through the College Station Regional and Tallahassee Super Regional to advance to the College World Series for the first time since 1999. The Aggies punched their ticket with an emphatic 11-2 win over Florida State in



the deciding game of the Tallahassee Super Regional. While the clinching victory was convincing, the road to get to Omaha was anything but easy. When the eight national seeds were announced for the NCAA Baseball Championship, the Aggies were inexplicably passed over despite sharing the Big 12 regular season crown as well as claiming the league's postseason title in dramatic walk-off fashion. Texas A&M was one of 16 teams selected to host a regional and advanced to the Tallahassee Super Regional after getting past Wright State, Seton Hall and Arizona. It took three games, but the Aggies were able to take two from the Seminoles on their home field to advance to Omaha for the first time in the Rob Childress era.

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[10] ALL-AMERICAN ADAMS

In just two short years in Aggieland, Danielle Adams accomplished things that no other women's basketball player had ever done at Texas A&M. After averaging 22.3 points, 8.5 rebounds and 1.3 blocks per game in 38 starts as a senior, Adams was tabbed A&M's first State Farm All-American, first AP First Team All-American and first USBWA All-American. She closed out her illustrious career with Aggie records for most points (40) and most blocks (10) in a single game, most points in a single season (847), most points in two consecutive seasons (1,386) and the best career scoring average (19.5 ppg). And on the grandest stage, Adams was at her absolute best. Scoring at will, grabbing boards and making a key steal, she dominated the second half of the national championship game, leading the Aggies to a thrilling 76-70 victory over Notre Dame. After claiming the program's first-ever national championship, Adams was named Most Outstanding Player of the NCAA Women's Final Four. She was drafted 20th overall by the WNBA's San Antonio Silver Stars and in just her third game as a professional, Adams set a franchise-rookie record with 32 points in a game.



[09] FULLER RETURNS

After a record-setting junior season, Jeff Fuller had a huge decision to make. Stay in Aggieland for one more year or forgo his senior season to enter the NFL Draft. As the deadline loomed, many insiders believed the All-Big 12 receiver was as good as gone. After all, Fuller became the first 1,000-yard receiver in A&M history in 2010 while tying or breaking three school records with 72 catches for 1,066 yards and 12 touchdowns. And he already owns the career receiving touchdowns record with 29 and ranks No. 2 in career catches and yards. When decision day arrived, Fuller surprised many by announcing that he would return for his senior season at Texas A&M. For inspiration, Fuller had to look no further than teammate Von Miller who drastically improved his draft stock after coming back for his senior season. Talk of the impending NFL lockout certainly was a factor as well. More than anything, Fuller's decision meant the Aggies will return 10 of 11 starters from a unit that averaged 441.8 yards of total offense per game in 2010, including 276.8 passing yards per contest. With Fuller in the fold, Texas A&M will likely begin the 2011 season with a top 10 or 15 national ranking.



[11] HEART AND SOUL OF THE CREW

When Michael Hodges transferred to Texas A&M from the Air Force Academy, there wasn't a scholarship or even a spot on the roster waiting for him in Aggieland. In fact, the coaching staff didn't even know he existed. Hodges went to walk-on tryouts, made the team and after sitting out a year because of transfer rules, worked his way into the two-deep at inside linebacker and quickly became a starter during his junior season. As a senior leader, Hodges started every game, earning second-team All-Big 12 honors, and led the Aggies in tackles despite being injured in the bowl game against LSU. On the biggest stages, Hodges was at his best. In the Aggies' upset over No. 8 Oklahoma, Hodges had a career-best 19 tackles and two sacks, earning Big 12 Player of the Week and honorable mention National Player of the Week honors. Two weeks later, Hodges was again named Big 12 Defensive Player of the Week after a 14-tackle performance in the upset win over No. 8 Nebraska. He also recorded 13 tackles in the Thanksgiving victory over Texas in Austin. Off the field, Hodges completed his first semester of graduate school with a 4.0 grade point average and was named a first-team ESPN Academic All-American – the first Aggie to earn that honor since offensive lineman Seth McKinney in 2001. The unquestioned heart and soul of the Texas A&M defense, Hodges was named the Aggie Heart Award winner at the team's banquet – the highest honor for a Texas A&M senior football player.

[12] GRAY RISES TO THE OCCASION

When Christine Michael suffered a broken right tibia in the third quarter of the Texas Tech game, his sophomore season was suddenly over and there were serious doubts in the Aggies' ability to win any of the games left on their already daunting November schedule. However, those doubts were put to rest the very next week in a 33-19 upset over No. 11 Oklahoma. In his first game as the featured running back, Cyrus Gray stepped up to the challenge and ran for 122 yards and a crucial touchdown on 22 carries against the vaunted Sooner defense. The following week against Baylor, the junior all-purpose back carried the ball 28 times for 137 yards and a career-high four touchdowns in a 42-30 victory. Then, in an epic 9-6 upset over 9th-ranked Nebraska, Gray again stepped up with 137 yards on the ground on 26 carries and a career-high 65 yards receiving on nine catches. Cy-Fy showed everyone that he gets better and better the more times he touches the ball. In the season finale against Texas, Gray became the first Aggie running back to reach 200 yards since 1995, rushing for a career-high 223 yards and two long touchdowns to help send the rival Longhorns to their first losing season since 1997. With the big night, Gray became the first Aggie to rush for more than 1,000 yards in a season since 2003. Cy-Fy closed the 2010 season with 100 yards in the Cotton Bowl meaning he will begin his senior season with a streak of seven straight 100-yard rushing games – the second longest in A&M history behind Darren Lewis' string of 10 in 1988. **AI**





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2010



2011



14

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT LEGENDARY HEAD COACH PAT HENRY AND HIS AGGIE TRACK AND FIELD PROGRAM



BY MACY SAVAGE '12 & BRIAN DAVIS '01

How would you describe the feeling of bringing home dual national championships for the third consecutive year?

As a coaching staff, our goals are centered on things other than saying, 'we are going to try to go and win that third one this year.' That doesn't happen. It's about each athlete's individual performance. If each athlete does what we expect them to do then somebody is going to add up the team score and we are probably going to be pretty good because we have a great group of athletes. So it's about us trying to get our athletes to have a great day on the same day. So I don't think about winning a championship. People think that there is no way that's true, but to me it's wasted time. The time you spend has to be on what you are actually capable of doing. And if you got beat, but each one of those individuals got better, then it's OK because you did the best you could do. I was probably a little more surprised after these championships than some others. And it really came about when the TV cameras were filming our athletes and everybody was lined up on the awards stand. They were all holding up three fingers. We don't talk about that, but it was something I was surprised to see – that it even meant something to a freshman that had only been there one time. It was part of what these championships were about to them. As the coach and coaching staff, we were probably the last ones to know that it was a dynamic of these championships. It was an afterthought for us, but maybe for our athletes it wasn't.

How rewarding was it to watch your athletes celebrate the championships?

That's why you coach. It's just like an elementary school teacher. There's no difference. They want to see that kid learn how to print an 'A.' As coaches, it's about watching your athletes be successful. It was very gratifying and a great championship.

The championships have come down to the final event the past two years. When it gets to that point, do you start adding things up and think about the possibility of winning it all?

The statisticians on my staff know those things and I'm usually telling them to stay away from me because I don't really want to know. Coming down to the last race, it's important for me to be able to talk to both of those relay teams and let them know what's on the line and what it will take to win. But it still took something that happened two days ago to make that happen. It's about getting it done when you have to get it done, and then have some one step up and do something that they weren't expected to do. Someone beats someone by 4 cm and someone falls down in a hurdle and we lose points and somebody else falls down and we gain points... those things aren't countable, but they happen. That's what makes a championship great.

Have you ever seen a finish as good as Jessica Beard's dominating performance in the 4 x 400 relay?

Jessica has run some great legs like that and so has Tabarie [Henry]. And they were completely different legs. A lot of people think you just run as fast as you can and turn left. They think that's track. When she got that stick, she had to measure her ability and the people in front of her. She had to know what she was going to be able to do, how she was going to do it and at what time could she do it. She had to see it happening. She could have gone out and blasted and caught people by 300 meters, but not been able to run the last 100 meters and gotten beat. So she had to be very smart about how she did things. Tabarie was the opposite. He didn't run as fast as he can run, but he knew we had to win the relay to win the championship. He was going to do whatever it took to win that race, but it didn't matter what the time was. Tabarie worked just hard enough to make the next guy run faster than he wanted to run and once he got close, Tabarie just pulled away. It was a different dynamic in both relays and it takes smart people to be able to do that.

What makes an athlete successful in your program?

There are a lot of keys to being successful. Consistency is probably one of the words I talk about as much as anything. Trust is a huge word in what we do. Care. Expectations. All those words are very important. Consistency means not just some of the time... it means being consistent in your training all of the time. Consistent in your diet all of the time; consistent in the classroom all of the time; consistency

in your life with your girlfriend or boyfriend... you have to have stability so a big part of it comes back to that. You have to trust in the plan we have as coaches. You have to be willing to work harder than you have ever worked before. You have to have great expectations for yourself. Jessica has to see herself winning that race before she can win it. She also has to have expectations for the second leg of that relay to do exactly what it took to get her in the position to win. You have to have great expectations for your teammates, be happy for them and get upset with them when things don't go right. Those are all learned all year long.

What has this senior class meant to your program?

This is a good senior class. We've had three or four really good senior classes in a row now. If we aren't losing great ones, then we aren't doing our jobs as coaches. This is a good size class. We are losing some great talent, but I'm glad we are losing great talent.

Is recruiting a 24/7, 365-day a year job for you?

Yes, it never stops. And in our sport, we recruit some internationally. We had six of them with us this year and they don't know what time it is. Whatever time it is in France sometimes doesn't match up with what it is in College Station. Recruiting is a never-ending process. It's something you really have to enjoy.

How much has recruiting changed at A&M since you arrived seven years ago?

That has changed significantly. They've always been receptive of Texas A&M, knowing that it is a great academic institution. That has always been a very positive part of it. People know what kind of community this is and that helps in recruiting. Recruiting is easier now, yet it's harder. People think it's always going to be easier when you win. The problem is there are still only 12.6 scholarships on the men's side and 18 on the ladies side. That's not per year – that's total. So the balancing act is the most difficult part. I've let some great athletes go – some of which were on the edge of beating us in the championships – because I didn't have

the numbers available that it would take to get them here.

Do you think your program has helped instill a culture of winning on campus that has contributed to such a successful year in Aggie athletics?

Bill and I talked about this seven years ago when he came to Baton Rouge to discuss this position. It is about creating an environment in your department. The same thing happened at LSU. We are dealing with young people and all those young people communicate with each other. So when one team is successful, the others are saying, 'There's no difference here. Why can't we do that?' I think our department is getting better because we have teams that continue to get a little better and it puts the pressure on the next team and pressure on the next coach and that's tough sometimes. That's the way athletics is. You have to be able to step up and take that. I think everybody is starting to understand that we can all be successful. It's a mindset. How you think is a huge part of being successful. It's not all about athletic ability; it's about how you think.

Is your program where you envisioned it being when you took the job?

I felt like we had the ability to be in the mix all the time if we were to do some things. Now my first two years here were pretty tough. It's just like our football program. You cannot affect change in two years. You can't do it. Mike [Sherman] has done a pretty good job of doing what he has done in three years. In our third year here, we were starting to see a light at the end of the tunnel. In our fourth year, we were really close. I hope to be like my athletes. I want them to see themselves being better every year, being successful and being a winner. I look at what I do in the same regard. If I do one thing right as a head coach, it's to surround myself with great assistants. I've been fortunate to do that. I have a great staff and they work really hard. We are very cohesive and have the same philosophy about things. We all deal with young people who want to be successful. Nobody is coming out there to fail. It's about that and thinking that way.

Do most of your athletes have Olympic aspirations when they get here?

You know, we have 100 Texans on this team and there are only 32 Olympians or so. You have to think that way and have aspirations, but you also have to be realistic about your approach to things. We have a lot of people out there with the goal to contribute to the team at Texas A&M. That's it. But you have to have a nucleus of people who see themselves as the best.

Next year, all of your returning athletes will have won a national title each year they've been here. Is it tough to keep their focus on doing what it takes to get there again?

That's why we run the program the way that we do. Yeah, we want to win, but if all you think about is winning a championship, then you aren't going to do the things that you need to do to get there. We look at the individual. If that individual is not focused on getting better, we know it right away. So we handle that individually, not as a team. If you do it the right way, eventually all of those individuals will come together. I want them to know that when they put that maroon on that it means something. There's something behind them. They are running for some of the people who ran before them. It may sound hokey, but it's true. They feel that when they put it on.

Has anyone asked you about a quadruple double yet?

Yes. The first time I won a championship at this level in 1988, the CBS reporter came up and asked, 'Can you win it again next year?' It wasn't to talk about what just happened. The press always asks the same thing. I learned then that I have to keep a good balance myself and can't worry about a lot of the other stuff. So you can ask those questions, but that doesn't mean I have to answer them. Winning it again is not the challenge.

How do you prepare the incoming freshmen to participate in such an elite program?

That starts in the recruiting process. I have to go in their home and determine first of all, if they are going to fit us. There are a lot of people that can run, jump or throw far or fast, but they aren't always the kind of people I want in our program. So recruiting becomes finding the pieces that go together in the puzzle. Almost without exception, if we're being successful, the people that we recruit are the people who fit our dynamic so they just fall right into place. Some people think you are born and you run fast or you jump high or whatever, but that's about as far from the truth as you can get. It's like saying someone is born to be a quarterback or a pitcher or a guard. The amount of work they have to put in to get there is enormous. It's no different here. All athletes are born with certain abilities that other people don't have, but they have to refine it and they have to get better at it. The difference between great and just being a runner in 100 meters is not far. If you win by the smallest of margins, you are the best in the world. If you are a little behind, you could be eighth and nobody even knows you ran the race. It's about what you think and how you see yourself. That's my job. **AT**



Texas A&M plans to start construction on a state-of-the-art outdoor track and field complex in 2012 with its completion expected in about one year.

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AI Sportspersons of the Year 2011

BY JASON MCCONNELL '01 & JEREMY KSIONDA '04

Over the past few years, there has been one Texas A&M athlete that has stood above the rest as being the most dominate in their sport, leading their team in the national spotlight. In 2010-11, two athletes not only seized that role, they embraced it. During our deliberations for this award, two names clearly stood out. Both were qualified. Both were deserving. So, instead of our annual Sportsperson of the Year, *Aggieland Illustrated* presents our first-ever Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year for 2010-11.

AI SPORTSWOMAN OF THE YEAR: DANIELLE ADAMS

After transferring from junior college, Danielle Adams made a big impact during her first year on campus, leading the Aggies to another Big 12 Tournament championship. However, her junior season ended with a disappointing early exit from the NCAA Tournament.

Coming into the 2010-11 season, Texas A&M head coach Gary Blair said that Adams had all the skills of a big-time player such as leadership and dependability, however, "This is her year to step up."

She did that and then some, all the way to the national championship podium in Indianapolis. After bringing home the program's first-ever national title as well as becoming the first All-American in program history, Adams was an obvious choice for AI Sportswoman of the Year.

During her senior year, Adams garnered a host of awards: All-Big 12 First Team, Big 12 All-Tournament Team, a State Farm Wade Trophy Finalist, a Naismith Trophy Finalist, a John R. Wooden Award Finalist, NCAA Dallas Regional All-Tournament Team and the Most Outstanding Player in the 2011 NCAA Women's Final Four.

Adams will be remembered as a dominant player on the court and will continue to be an ambassador for A&M women's athletics. And of course, as an All-American and a national champion.

AI SPORTSMAN OF THE YEAR: VON MILLER

After Von Miller's record-breaking junior season and announcement to return for his senior campaign, it was an obvious choice to name him our 2009-10 Sportsperson of the Year.

So in a spectacular senior season in which he claimed the Butkus Award and consensus All-American status while helping bring back the Wrecking Crew and leading the Aggies to a Big 12 South title, Miller was an obvious choice to be the first athlete to repeat as an AI Sportsperson of the Year.

While Miller's name will forever be etched in the history books for his sack numbers and All-American accolades, he will be remembered in the hearts of Aggie fans for generations to come for his leadership, passion and commitment to helping rebuild a struggling Texas A&M football program into one that competes for conference championships.

A respectful, humble, and likeable young man with a zeal and passion for Texas A&M that matches any that have gone before him, Miller was a joy to watch in maroon and white, and we will forever wish him the best that life has to offer. **AI**





Aggies in Afghanistan prior to Aggie Muster 2011: (l to r) Lt. Col. Tim Gibbons '91, Maj. Brian Harper '98, Capt. Kurt Anderson '01, Capt. Sandie Murphy '00, Capt. Brian Kriss '01, Capt. David Westfall '01, Maj. Kevin Thompson '95 and Maj. Doug Watjus '95.



My dad, Michael E. Richardson, graduated from Texas A&M University in 1984 with a degree in Computer Science.

He, like his own dad, was in the Corps all four years loving every bit of it. He was in N-1 Neanderthals. He met his best friend there and soon to be best man. He joined the Air Force right when he graduated and was stationed in Montgomery, Alabama. Soon after he came back to Texas, he married my mom – his college sweetheart (Class of '84) – wearing his uniform and cutting his wedding cake with his Aggie saber. Two years later, I was born. We were stationed in Omaha, Nebraska where my two siblings were born. Finally, we moved to San Antonio where my family now calls home. My dad was deployed to Saudi Arabia and then came back safely home. He is now a Lieutenant Colonel for the United States Air Force. I am so proud of him. He has always represented the spirit of A&M. I am just so grateful that I am following in his footsteps and trying to do the same.

– Mary Elizabeth Richardson
Class of 2012

Have a military appreciation story and/or picture to share?

We hope to make this a frequent feature of AI so please share with us. Email your stories, pictures, etc. to editor@aggiemag.com or mail them to PO Box 6841, Bryan, TX 77805. Or you can call us at 1-866-55-AG-MAG.

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Gates Awarded Presidential Medal of Freedom



President Obama presents the Presidential Medal of Freedom to retiring Defense Secretary Robert Gates for his four decades of public service.

The medal is the highest honor the president can give a civilian. Gates left his post as president of Texas A&M University four and a half years ago when President Bush called upon him to serve as our nation's 22nd secretary of defense. (right) Gates poses with Aggie troops in Afghanistan. **AI**



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GLEN'S GREAT EIGHT

7. Olsen Magic in Johnson's Finale, 2005

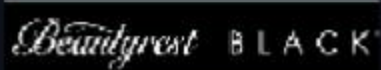
After scoring the tying run in the bottom of the ninth, the Aggies defeated No. 3 Texas in the tenth inning when junior Cliff Pennington scored the game-winning run on a wild pitch. The dramatic upset victory was Mark Johnson's final game at Olsen Field as the A&M head coach.





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